

▲ Fort Riley's history is remembered through the Old Bill monument that adorns Cavalry Parade Field on Main Post.

Prairie Post

Hits 150



Story by Bill McKale

ONE hundred fifty years ago Fort Riley, Kan., was established as a post from which soldiers of the 7th Cavalry could protect people and goods moving over the Oregon and Santa Fe trails from Indian attacks. Today the post is known as “America’s Warfighting Center” and is home to elements of the 1st Armored and 1st Infantry divisions. ➤

Bill McKale is the director of the Fort Riley Museum.



▲ Quarters 24 is the only remaining set of officer’s quarters from the fort’s construction in the mid-1850s.

During the 1850s and into the Civil War period the fort was a staging area for soldiers dispersed along overland trails and near settlements. In 1892 the Cavalry and Light Artillery School was built at Fort Riley and, later, the Mounted Service School focused on training individual soldiers and officers rather than regiments.

During that same time period, the fort was selected as one of the installations to host the first large-scale combined maneuvers between

regular and National Guard units.

The United States' entry into World War I established Fort Riley as a divisional training center and resulted in the construction of Camp Funston, where the 10th and 89th divisions, as well as elements of the 92nd Div., trained. Between the wars, the fort again became a center for instruction, training and summer camps.


After WWII Fort Riley's Camp Forsyth became home to the Cavalry Replacement Training Center, and a

rebuilt Camp Funston was used by armored divisions. The Army General Ground School was created and operated until 1950 to teach new officers such common military skills as map reading, company administration and military law. The fort also operated one of the Army's first officer candidate schools.

During the Cold War years Fort Riley was home to the Aggressor School. Similar to the opposing force concept of today, the "aggressors" provided a realistic "enemy" force for unit training.

The 10th Inf. Div. was stationed at Fort Riley between 1948 and 1954 and conducted basic training for new recruits. In 1955 the post welcomed the 1st Inf. Div.

The "Big Red One" deployed soldiers to Southeast Asia in the mid-1960s, demonstrating that the post could equip, train and deploy soldiers worldwide. More recently, soldiers of the 1st Inf. Div. and other Fort Riley units deployed to the Persian Gulf region for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm in 1990 and 1991.

Today, Fort Riley continues its' 150-year tradition of training soldiers to protect and defend our nation. 



▲ During the late 1800s and early 1900s wagons were used for many things, including transporting the wounded.



▲ The 1st Cavalry commander rides his vehicle during a pass and review ceremony.



▲ A view of Camp Funston during WWI.

Fort Riley

“America’s Warfighting Center”



▲ “Chief” the last cavalry horse at Fort Riley to be maintained on Army rolls died in 1968.



▲ Ft. Riley soldiers from 1st Battalion, 5th Field Artillery, train for their deployment to Iraq in September 2003.



▲ Thousands of Big Red One Soldiers stand at attention during a Division Review ceremony in 1975.